

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A vacuum vaporization equipment for metallizing a strip substrate, comprising:

- a plurality of vaporization sources, each of said vaporization sources being heated and continuously fed with a metal which is liquefied and vaporized by each of said vaporization sources respectively, each of said vaporization sources having a body extending along a main longitudinal direction and including a first surface means and a second surface means spaced apart from said first surface means but in close proximity to said first surface means to maintain a continuous conductive cross section means with said first surface means, each of said surface means provided for ~~enhancing the adhesion~~ increasing the wettability of molten metal in a location;

- a feeding means for feeding said substrate over said sources along a feed direction;

- a continuous delivery means for the delivery of metal wire to said sources, wherein each of said sources holds at least two pools of molten metal, each pool being maintained separate from the other pool by each said surface means thereof, aligned along said longitudinal direction, and wherein each of said two pools is fed by a corresponding metal wire continuously delivered by said corresponding continuous delivery means.

2. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 1, wherein said first and second surface means are defined as two cavities which are aligned along said longitudinal direction, said cavities defining areas for the formation of said pools of molten metal.

3. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 2, wherein said two cavities of each source have a rectangular shape in plan view, said rectangular shape is elongated along said longitudinal direction.

4. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 1, , wherein said vaporization sources are made of an electrically conducting material and are heated by Joule effect as a result of the passage of current.

5. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 2, wherein said vaporization sources are made of an electrically conducting material and are heated by the Joule effect as a result of the passage of current.

6. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 3, wherein said vaporization sources are made of an electrically conducting material and are heated by the Joule effect as a result of the passage of current.

7. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 1, wherein each of said surface means includes a respective surface superficial depression so as to form a respective pool of molten metal.

8. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 7, wherein each of said

surface depressions is formed by a plurality of superficial incision lines.

9. (Currently Amended) The equipment according to claim 1, wherein each of said surface [[zone]] means is defined in the region of a plurality of superficially processed lines.

10. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 9, wherein said superficially processed lines are superficial incision lines.

11. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 7, wherein each of said superficial depressions is formed by a single lowered surface portion of said source.

12. (Currently Amended) The equipment according to claim 9, wherein said superficially processed lines alter the superficial wettability of the surface of said source in said [[zones]] surface means where at least two pools are formed.

13. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 10, wherein said superficial incision lines are laser incision lines.

14. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 1, wherein said vaporization sources are alongside each other in an alignment transverse to the direction in which said substrate is fed.

15. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 14, wherein said vaporization sources are offset and staggered with respect to each other in an alignment transverse to the direction in which said substrate is fed.

16. (Previously Presented) The equipment according to claim 1, wherein said sources are aligned with their longitudinal direction parallel to said feed direction of said substrate.

17. (Currently Amended) A source for the vaporization of a metal under vacuum comprising:

a body with an upper surface, said body being elongated in a longitudinal direction along a direction parallel with respect to an advancement direction of a substrate, and said upper surface containing at least two pools of molten metal, said body including a first surface means and a second surface means spaced apart from said first surface means but in close proximity to said first surface means to maintain a continuous conductive cross section means with said first surface means, each of said surface means provided for ~~enhancing the adhesion~~ increasing the wettability of molten metal in a location and retaining each pool separate from the other pool thereon.

18. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 17, wherein said upper surface has a pair of cavities defining said pair of surface ~~[[zones]]~~ means alongside each other in said longitudinal direction to form two wells of molten metal.

19. (Currently Amended) A source for the vaporization of a metal under vacuum comprising an electrically conducting body which is elongated in a longitudinal direction along a direction parallel with respect to an advancement direction of a substrate, said body forming a continuous boat or bar with two opposite ends, wherein an upper surface of said boat or bar holds at least two pools of molten metal, and said upper surface includes a first surface means and a second surface means spaced apart from said first surface means but in close proximity to said first surface means to maintain a continuous conductive cross section means with said first surface means, each of said surface means provided for ~~enhancing the adhesion~~ increasing the wettability of molten metal on a location and retaining each pool separate from the other pool thereon.

20. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 19, wherein a pair of cavities are provided on said surface, arranged alongside each other in said longitudinal direction to form two wells of molten metal.

21. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 20, wherein said cavities have a rectangular shape in a plan view.

22. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 20, wherein said cavities have substantially flat bottoms.

23. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 19, which is made of an electrically conducting material which is heated by the direct passage of current.

24. (Currently Amended) The source according to claim 19, wherein said two surface [[zones]] means form said two pools of molten metal, each said surface [[zone]] means being defined in a region of a plurality of superficially processed lines.

25. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 24, wherein said superficially processed lines are superficial incision lines.

26. (Currently Amended) The source according to claim 24, wherein said superficially processed lines alter the superficial wettability of the surface of said source in said surface [[zones]] means where said at least two pools are formed.

27. (Previously Presented) The source according to claim 25, wherein said superficial incision lines are laser incision lines.

28. (Currently Amended) A vacuum vaporization plant for the metallization of a web-like substrate, the vaporization plant comprising:

- a plurality of vaporization sources, each of said vaporization sources supplied with a metal wire which is liquefied and vaporized by said vaporization sources, each of said

vaporization sources having a body elongated in a respective main longitudinal direction and including a first surface means and a second surface means spaced apart from said first surface means but in close proximity to said first surface means to maintain a continuous conductive cross section means with said first surface means, each of said surface means provided for ~~enhancing the adhesion~~ increasing the wettability of molten metal in a location;

- a feeding means for feeding said substrate above said sources, in a feeding direction inclined from parallel to said main longitudinal direction, said vaporization sources being arranged alongside each other in an alignment substantially perpendicular to said feeding direction;

- a continuous supplying means for supplying a respective said metal wire to each of said sources;

- a supporting means for supporting and heating said sources, wherein each of said sources holds at least two pools of molten metal, each pool being maintained separate from the other pool by each of said first and second surface means, wherein each of said pools of molten metal is fed continuously with said respective metal wire supplied by a respective supplying means and wherein said sources are arranged with their main longitudinal direction inclined with respect to said direction of feeding of said substrate at an angle other than 0° and 90°.

29. (Previously Presented) The plant according to Claim 28, wherein said at least two pools of each source are aligned with each other approximately in said main longitudinal direction of said sources.

30. (Previously Presented) The plant according to Claim 28, wherein said angle between said main longitudinal direction of each source and said direction of feeding of said substrate is such as to position mutually said pools of molten metal of adjacent sources so that they are at least partially staggered in the direction of said alignment, substantially perpendicular to said direction of feeding of said substrate.

31. (Currently Amended) The plant according to Claim 28, wherein each of said [[zones]] surface means include a respective surface superficial depression so as to form a respective pool of molten metal.

32. (Previously Presented) The plant according to Claim 31, wherein each of said surface depressions is formed by a plurality of superficial incision lines.

33. (Currently Amended) The plant according to Claim 28, wherein each of said two [[zones]] surface means provides for the formation of pools of liquid metal, each [[zone]] surface means being defined in a region of a plurality of superficially processed lines.

34. (Previously Presented) The plant according to Claim 33, wherein said superficially processed lines are superficial incision lines.

35. (Previously Presented) The plant according to Claim 31, wherein each of said

superficial depressions is formed by a single lowered surface portion of said source.

36. (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 28, wherein said angle between said main longitudinal direction of said sources and said direction of feeding of said substrate is between 15° and 60° .

37 (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 28, wherein said angle between said main longitudinal direction of said sources and said direction of feeding of said substrate is between 20° and 55° .

38 (Previously Presented) The plant according to claim 28, wherein said angle between said main longitudinal direction of said sources and said direction of feeding of said substrate is between 25° and 45° .